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14 MAR 1978

MEMORANDUM FOR: NIO for Conventional Forces
FROM: Director of Central Intelligence
SUBJECT: Terms of Reference for NIE 11-10-78

1. I read the draft Terms of Reference and encourage you to go ahead. My principal reservation is again on whether the scope of the project may be a bit too ambitious. Specifically, I worry about the whole section on whether or not the Soviets would attempt SLOC interdiction and the section on whether they could undertake a second front during a full-scale NATO/Warsaw Pact conflict. Both of these are appropriate and admirable but, it seems to me, almost worthy of an entire study. We have done a piece on the Soviets and SLOCs in connection with a full-scale war and while this is irrelevant and quite a different case it will get us very deeply into risks and intentions that are difficult to analyze or quantify. Go ahead, but if these areas or one or two others really become intractable I think it's important that we at least get the other portions of the study accomplished.

2. Let me advise that I have a personal aversion to the term "interposition." I've never quite understood if what is meant is simply that the positioning of naval forces between other naval forces in some geographical objective will have a psychological deterrent impact; if so, that is fine. If it somehow means that this will block the other force, I do not understand it. The sea is such that the only way you can blockade people is by physical violence, not by standing in the roadway and physically blocking the scene. In short, I have a prejudice that this is a term overworked by would-be naval strategists who seem to think we can accomplish more by positioning naval forces in the rear camp.

3. I note in Chapter III there is no discussion of amphibious projection of forces. It seems to me that this is appropriate. Again, I have a strong prejudice which you may or may not confirm. I think many naval types try

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to overplay the Soviet amphibious capability, which I do if you limit it to Norway or Turkey. However, it seems to me your study should look at that and establish just what the limits are.

4. What interests me most is, in fact, the thing that has been going on in the Horn of Africa, where surrogate forces and massive Soviet sealifts might have been employed. I think we need to look at what their potential is for that, what the costs of an operation like this are, whether there are likely to be any real inhibitions from overflight clearances and such. In short, many of us for years have talked about the naval forces being the real way to project power over seas; it is my view that the Soviets do not have any capability to "project power" (in my definition of the term) by naval force. They can exercise sea control over seas but they cannot project amphibious forces or air power or significant bombardment power onto distant shores. Hence, the real Soviet ability to project power over the seas is pressed for its air lift capacity.

I would hope here that there would be a clear delineation of what its capability is for air drop versus air lift. What is a reasonable radius from which the Soviets could air drop more than a token combat force?


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cc: AD/NFAC

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